

## Message Text

SECRET POSS DUPE

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
----- 058489

O R 051122Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5149

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 10384

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM HABIB

MANILA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, PINT, MARR, MASS, SREF, ASEAN, TH

SUBJECT: VISIT TO THAILAND

1. THE ATMOSPHERE IN THAILAND IS DETECTABLY MORE TENSE THAN IS THE CASE IN THE COUNTRIES FARTHER SOUTH WHICH I HAVE JUST VISITED. NEVERTHELESS, THE CONCERNS REFLECTED IN THE WAKE OF INDOCHINA ARE NOT DISSIMILAR TO THOSE I FOUND IN INDONESIA, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE. BECAUSE THE CONCERNS ARE MORE INTENSE, HOWEVER, AND THE THREAT MORE IMMINENT, THE RTG REACTION AND INTENTIONS DO DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE THINKING EVIDENCED IN THE SOUTHERN ASEAN CAPITALS.

2. THE IMMEDIATE SHOCK WAVE OF THE INDOCHINESE COLLAPSE HAS SWEEPED THROUGH THAILAND, AND A SECOND PHASE OF THAI REACTION IS NOW DEVELOPING. THE THAI ARE PROCEEDING MORE DELIBERATELY AT THIS STAGE OF THEIR CALCULATIONS ON HOW TO DEFEND THEMSELVES. THEY ARE FACTORING IN NOT ONLY THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S., BUT THE RELATIONS THEY SHOULD SEEK WITH OTHERS IN THE REGION, INCLUDING THE PRC, THE TWO VIETNAMS, MOSCOW AND ASEAN.

3. INTERNAL SECURITY. THE LONG-STANDING FESTERING SORE

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OF THAI INSURGENCIES, PARTICULARLY ALONG THE LAOTIAN BORDER, POSE A SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THREAT TO THE NATION NOW THAT

THE INSURGENTS ENJOY UNLIMITED ACCESS TO ADJACENT HOSPITABLE TURF. SOME 8000 ARMED COMMUNISTS HAVE ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES ON THAI TERRITORY, AND HAVE PURSUED THE CLASSIC TACTICS, AS EMPLOYED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, IN PREPARING THE WAY FOR A POTENTIALLY RAPID EXPANSION OF THEIR INFLUENCE AND CAPABILITY TO UNDERMINE THE RTG. WITH A NUDGE FROM HANOI, THEIR THREAT COULD BE TRANSLATED QUICKLY TO REAL TROUBLE FOR THE THAI. MEANWHILE, THE THAI ARMED FORCES HAVE FAILED TO DEMONSTRATE THE WILL TO CRUSH A STILL CRUSHABLE IRRITANT, AND GOVERNMENT POLICY HAS CONSISTENTLY ACCORDED THE PROBLEM A RELATIVELY LOW PRIORITY.

4. PERHAPS A MORE IMMINENT INTERNAL THREAT CONFRONTS THE RTG, IN THE FORM OF POLITICALLY AROUSED STUDENTS WHOSE IMPACT ON EVENTS WAS OBVIOUS IN OCTOBER 1973 AND DURING THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT. HIGHLY NATIONALISTIC, WITH DEFINITE LEFTIST TENDENCIES AMONG A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER, THE STUDENT THREAT KEEPS THE RTG FEET TO THE FIRE, AND SERVES INTER ALIA TO OBLIGE THE THAI MILITARY TO THINK TWICE ABOUT MOVES IT MIGHT MAKE. THE PRESENT RTG SEEKS CONSTANTLY TO ASSUAGE THE STUDENTS, WHO ARE REINFORCED BY AN INCREASINGLY MILITANT LABOR MOVEMENT, BUT THE DAY MAY COME WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS OBLIGED TO BITE THE BULLET AND RISK CONFRONTATION IN ORDER TO ADHERE TO RATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OR DEFENSE POLICIES.

5. THE U.S.-THAI RELATIONSHIP. WITH RESPECT TO THE U.S., THE THAI DO NOT WANT TO SEE ABRUPT CHANGES IN OUR RELATIONSHIP, AND I PERCEIVE NO NEED TO EFFECT ANY SUDDEN ALTERATION IN OUR POLICY VIS-A-VIS THAILAND. THE THAI WANT CONTINUED AMERICAN ASSISTANCE, AND I BELIEVE WE SHOULD PROVIDE IT WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS. AS FOR THE TWO VIETNAMS, I ANTICIPATE THE THAI WILL EXERCISE VERY CONSIDERABLE CAUTION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY WILL PROBABLY MOVE SOMEWHAT FASTER WITH THE MORE PREDICTABLE NORTH VIETNAMESE THAN THEY WILL WITH THE PRG, WITH WHOM THEY WERE NOT VERY IMPRESSED IN THEIR FIRST CONTACT TWO WEEKS AGO. I EXPECT THAT IN THE CASE OF THE PRC THEY WILL NORMALIZE RELATIONS VERY QUICKLY, PARTLY IN  
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THE FAINT HOPE THAT THE PRC WILL PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR THEM AGAINST HANOI.

6. SURVIVABILITY OF PRESENT RTG. THIS GOVERNMENT IS WEAK, AND IF ONE HAD TO WAGER, THE MONEY WOULD BE ON THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT FALLING IN A RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD. ONE SENSES, HOWEVER, THAT KHUKRIT IS A SOPHISTICATED, AND CLEVER POLITICIAN WHO MAY SUCCESSFULLY EXTEND HIS TENURE IN OFFICE THROUGH CAREFUL MANEUVERING AND BY PLAYING ON THE FAIRLY WIDE-SPREAD FEAR OF A MILITARY TAKE-OVER. THE

THAI MILITARY ARE GRUMBLING ABOUT THE INCOMPETENT AND RELATIVELY LEFTWARD DIRECTION OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT DO NOT APPEAR READY TO ENGAGE IN AN OVERT MOVE. THEY WILL BIDE THEIR TIME, AND PROBABLY HOPE THAT THE SITUATION WILL DETERIORATE TO AN EXTENT THAT WILL PERMIT THE MILITARY TO TAKE OVER. THE SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES, KRIT SIWARA, IS THE ONLY CANDIDATE AT THIS STAGE, AND HE IS CLEARLY THINKING OF MOVING UP WITHIN THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS, I.E. VIA ELECTION.

7. MAYAGUEZ. ONLY IN THE BRIEFEST OF PASSING REFERENCES DID THE SUBJECT OF MAYAGUEZ ARISE DURING MY VISIT. THE THAI CLEARLY PREFER TO WILL THE INCIDENT AWAY, AND I DO NOT BELIEVE WE WILL HEAR MORE ABOUT IT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL BE A LOCAL POLITICAL FOOTBALL FOR SOME TIME.

8. RVNAF EQUIPMENT IN THAILAND. I MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER THAT THE EQUIPMENT EVACUATED FROM VIETNAM WHICH CURRENTLY RESIDES IN THAILAND SHOULD UNDER

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5150  
INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 10384

EXDIS

NO CIRCUMSTANCES BE RETURNED TO THE PRG. I AM CONFIDENT THEY UNDERSTAND OUR POSITION. I BELIEVE THEY WILL WORK THIS MATTER OUT TO OUR SATISFACTION, ALTHOUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IS STRUGGLING WITH A FORMULATION IN THE HOPE OF MINIMIZING THE IMPACT ON THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE DRV AND PRG.

9. NEW PROBLEM. APPROXIMATELY 8000 MEO REFUGEES, INCLUDING THE FAMED VANG PAO, HAVE FLED TO THAILAND OVER THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS. THE THAI FIND THE PRESENCE OF THESE MEO MOST WORRISOME, IN LARGE PART BECAUSE THEY CAN FORESEE THE MEO STIRRING UP TROUBLES VIS-A-VIS THE NEW AUTHORITIES IN LAOS AND THE DRV. THE RTG DOES NOT WISH TO BE SEEN AS THE PROTECTOR OF EX-CIA-SPONSORED MERCENARIES. TO ALLEVIATE THAI CONCERNS IN PART, WE MAY BE OBLIGED TO TAKE VANG PAO (AND HIS SIX WIVES) AS A REFUGEE, BUT THE PROBLEM WILL NOT BE COMPLETELY RESOLVED BY SUCH A SIMPLE STEP. THERE ARE LIKELY TO BE ADDITIONAL THOUSANDS OF MEO REFUGEES OOZING INTO THAILAND IN THE COMING WEEKS, AND WE CANNOT CONTEMPLATE ABSORBING THEM IN THE HILLS OF TENNESSEE.

10. ASEAN. THE THAI, TO A CERTAIN DEGREE, LOOK TO ASEAN FOR SUPPORT IN THE UNCERTAIN PERIOD THAT LIES AHEAD, BUT I DID NOT DISCOVER THE SAME FOCUS ON ASEAN AS WAS EVIDENT IN JAKARTA, KUALA LUMPUR, AND SINGAPORE. THE THAI WILL SEE WHAT THEY CAN EXTRACT FROM THEIR ASEAN PARTNERS, BUT  
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WILL NOT PLACE MUCH FAITH IN THE ORGANIZATION AS THEIR SALVATION.

1. U.S. TROOP DEPLOYMENT. THE RTG CONTINUES TO BE STUCK ON ITS MARCH, 1976 DEADLINE FOR THE COMPLETE EXTRACTION OF U.S. FORCES FROM THAILAND. THAI MILITARY HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT VIEW. IN MY JUDGMENT, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE U.S. ACT WITH GREAT CARE, IN A MANNER WHICH WILL INDICATE OUR READINESS TO COMPLY WITH THAI DESIRES WITHOUT PUSHING THE MATTER. BEYOND A DOUBT, IF THE RTG WANTS US OUT BY NEXT MARCH, I BELIEVE WE MUST ACCOMMODATE ITS DESIRES. HOWEVER, I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN RETAIN CERTAIN INTELLIGENCE ASSETS, AS THEY SERVE THE RTG JUST AS THEY SERVE US. IF THE THAI MILITARY HAVE THEIR WAY, WE CAN RETAIN A CONSIDERABLY GREATER MILITARY PRESENCE, IF WE SO DESIRE.

12. AT THIS STAGE THERE IS NO NEED TO APPEAR TO WISH TO FRUSTRATE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE RTG, BUT WE NEED NOT BE IN A HURRY TO BE EXCESSIVELY DEFINITIVE UNTIL PUSHED A BIT HARDER BY THE THAI. IF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT REMAINS IN OFFICE AND CONTINUES TO PURSUE THE LINE IT PRESENTLY MAINTAINS, WE WILL HAVE TIME TO DEAL WITH THEM. IF CHANGES OCCUR WE WILL SEE WHAT THEY BRING. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE UNDERSTANDS THIS POSITION, AND WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS PURSUED. WHATEVER COURSE EMERGES, WE SHOULD BE SURE TO HAVE CLEARLY IN MIND IN WASHINGTON JUST WHAT WE SEEK. THIS REQUIRES ANSWERS ANSWERW TO QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN POSED AND WHICH NEED WASHINGTON'S ANSWERS SO THAT WE KNOW

PRECISELY WHERE OUR INTERESTS LIE.  
WHITEHOUSE

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